Wonderful Stories of the Bible

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Weston. Vt. R. D.

December 26. 1930.

To Lucile.

From. Aunt Ella.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

And when they saw the young child with Mary his mother, they fell down and worshipped him.

Matthew 2:11

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WONDERFUL STORIES OF THE BIBLE

In Words Of Easy Reading

BY

JOSEPHINE POLLARD

Illustrated With

WORLD-FAMOUS
MASTERPIECES OF CHRISTIAN ART

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GOD MADE THE WORLD

FAR back in the past, more years than you could think or count, God made the world. It did not look at first as it does now for there was no live thing on it—no men, animals or birds; no bushes, trees or plants, but all was dark and drear.

Then God said, "Let there be light!" and daylight came. God saw the light and it pleased Him. He gave it the name of Day. When the day was gone and the dark came back to stay for a while, He gave the dark time the name of Night. Each day and night at that time was many thousands of years long. God did these things on the first day.

The next day God made the clouds and the sky in which they were to move. He gave the sky a name, calling it Heaven. This work He did on the second day.

He drove the waters to one place where they were both deep and wide and called the waters Seas, while to the dry land He gave the name of Earth. Upon this new earth He made the grass, trees, and shrubs to grow. He remembered to have the flowers shed sweet fragrance and the trees bear luscious fruit. God did these things on the third day.

And God put two great lights in the sky, the Sun to shine by day and the Moon to shine by night, and He put each star in its own place. These things He did on the fourth day.

He made all the fish that live in the water and the birds that swim upon it, as well as those that fly through the air. He taught the birds to sing their beautiful songs and to

build their nests in the deep woods. These things God did on the fifth day.

God made the animals: those that are wild and live in the deep dark woods far from the homes of men, and those that are tame and of use to men and live where men live —such as the horse, the cow, the ox and the sheep. He made the things that creep on the ground and those that fly, such as the busy bees and the gay butterflies. But He waited until the very last to perform the most wonderful of all His work. He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness." Out of the dust of the red earth He made him and breathed some of His own spirit into him, and he became a living soul, with a mind so he could think and so he could love. God told him he should rule every living thing in sea and earth and air. And God named the man Adam or "red dust". All these things God did on the sixth day.

The seventh day God did no work at all, but made it a day of rest.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

GOD made a garden for Adam to live in, where all kinds of trees grew which were lovely to look at and which bore fruit good to eat. In the midst of the garden grew the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. This beautiful place was called the Garden of Eden.

God told Adam he might eat of the fruit that grew on every tree in the garden except the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. He must not eat of that fruit for if he did he would be sure to die.

The animals were Adam's friends. He listened to their calls and to the songs of the birds. He picked the fragrant flowers and enjoyed all the beauties of the garden. But Adam was lonely. Every animal had its mate, and two by two the birds built their nests. Only Adam was alone. So God put Adam to sleep and when he woke he found beside him a woman. God had made her to be Adam's wife and helper.

The two lived together in the beautiful garden, and were very happy as they cared for it for they loved each other and God, their heavenly Father.

Now in the garden lived a serpent and into it the spirit of evil entered. This serpent said to the woman one day, "Has God told you not to eat of all the trees in the garden?"

She replied that they might eat of all the trees but one.

The serpent assured her it would not harm them, saying, "You will not die, but God knows when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil."

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

BECAUSE THEY HAD DISOBEYED THE HEAVENLY FATHER, GOD PUNISHED THEM. HE SENT THEM OUT OF EDEN AND BEFORE THE GATE OF THE BEAUTIFUL GARDEN HE SET ANGELS

Gazing at the tree, the woman saw the fruit was beautiful and it looked good to eat. She gave no thought to what God had commanded but took the fruit and ate and gave some of it to Adam too, and he also ate.

In the cool of the day they heard the sound of God walking in the garden. For the first time they did not come near Him when they heard His voice but ran and tried to hide from Him.

Then God spoke once more, saying to Adam, "Where art thou?"

Adam answered, "I heard Thy voice and I was afraid, so I hid from Thee."

Now Adam had never been afraid before, nor had he ever hidden from God. The heavenly Father knew he must have done wrong as he did not hasten gladly to Him.

"Didst thou eat of the tree I told thee not to eat of?" God asked.

"The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me gave me of the fruit, and I ate," Adam replied.

"What is this thou hast done?" God asked the woman, to which she made answer, "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat."

Then because they had disobeyed the heavenly Father who loved them, God punished them. He sent them out of Eden, and before the gate of the beautiful garden He set angels with flaming swords to keep watch over the Tree of Life. The two went away to make a new home and to work for their food, but not to be away from God. He would ever be with them, loving them and helping them learn to obey.

CAIN AND ABEL

AFTER God had sent Adam and his wife out of beautiful Eden, they made their home under the shelter of rocks and the shade of great trees. As time went on God sent them two sons so Adam called his wife Eve, meaning "life bearer". Cain was the older son, and when he grew to manhood became a farmer, planting fruits and vegetables. The younger son was Abel and he chose to be a shepherd, tending flocks of sheep.

For a few years they all lived happily together even though they toiled very hard. Then one year Cain gathered the harvest of his wide fields and great orchards and laid the choicest of the fruit on a heap of stones called an altar. This was his offering to God. Abel brought the finest of his new-born lambs and placed them on his altar. Knowing the gentleness and kindness in Abel's heart, God was greatly pleased and as a sign of His pleasure the smoke from his offering rose straight up. But as Cain allowed his passions to rule him, the smoke from his offering failed to rise.

As Cain looked upon the two offerings and saw the sign of God's displeasure with his, his rage mounted and hate for his brother grew and grew until one day when they were in the fields, he quarreled with Abel and killed him.

Then God said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" Cain replied.

But God knew what Cain had done and told him that because of his wickedness he should be an outcast and ever after move restlessly from place to place, never having a home. So Cain left the land where his father and mother dwelt and wandered far into strange countries.

CAIN AND ABEL

KNOWING THE GENTLENESS AND KINDNESS IN ABEL'S BREAST,
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NOAH'S ARK

IN the course of time, when there came to be a great many folks in the world, they forgot God. Even the little children did not try to please Him.

Now in spite of the world being so full of wickedness, there was one family who still loved God—Noah and his children.

God loved Noah and told him all he meant to do. He bade Noah build an ark or boat, and to make it large enough to carry all his children and two of every kind of bird and beast, for a great storm was to come and only those in the ark were to be saved.

Noah at once set about building the ark. He and his sons cut down big cypress trees which they used just as God had instructed them, laying the length of the ark four hundred and fifty feet and the breadth of it seventy-four feet. The height of it was forty-five feet, for it was built in three storeys and had rooms in it and a great door on the side. And it was well pitched both within and without so it was water-tight. While the work went on, people ridiculed Noah but he held steadfastly to his task, telling them all God had told him of His purposes.

Noah stored the ark with all kinds of food for the creatures he was to take with him, and from wooded mountain and grassy valley God gathered the beasts and birds.

Still the world paid no heed to Noah's warnings and to his entreaties that they give up their sins and lead good lives.

"Yet seven days I will stay my wrath," said God to Noah, "but do thou and all thy house come into the ark."

So Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, and

two of every kind of bird and beast passed through the great door of the ark. And God shut them in.

At the end of the seven days the rain set in. It seemed to pour out of the sky and all of the springs, rivers and seas rose until they spread over the length and breadth of the land. The waters came to the ark and rose so high that it was set afloat on the great wide sea.

NOAH SENT FORTH A DOVE

Then those who had paid no heed to Noah but had kept on in their sins were in a sad plight. For forty days it had rained, the flood had come and they knew now all Noah had told them was true. They fled in wild haste to the tops of the hills, hoping to find safety there. But it rained for five months and the flood rose still higher until there was no place for them to go. At last they perished. The ark alone with its living creatures drifted on the wide waters.

God took care of Noah and those with him, and after one hundred and fifty days of rain the clouds broke away, the sun shone once more and the waters fell so that the peaks of the mountains could be seen. After forty days the ark rested on a mountain called Ararat and then Noah opened a window and sent out a dove. The bird flew here and there in search of something green, but found no resting place. So she flew back to the ark and Noah put out his hand and took her in.

After seven days Noah sent the dove forth once more and at evening she came back with a leaf in her mouth. When Noah saw the leaf she carried he knew the waters were gone and green things were growing once more. After another seven days he sent the dove out for the third time but she did not return.

This was the end of the flood and at God's bidding Noah and all the creatures came out of the ark. Upon the hill where he stood Noah built an altar of great stones on which he laid beasts and birds and burned them for this was the way man gave thanks to God in those days. They saw a rainbow overarch the earth and heard God make his promise, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your children after you. This is the token of the covenant, my bow set in a cloud; I shall look upon it in everlasting remembrance, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh, but while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

HAGAR AND HER SON

MANY, many years after the flood, there lived in the land of Ur a good man named Abraham. He heard God say, "Get thee out of thy country, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Therefore Abraham took Sarah his wife, and his brother's son Lot, and they set out for the land which God had promised He would show them.

Abraham was a rich man and so was Lot; each had a great wealth of flocks and of herds and of tents.

When Abraham and Lot reached Canaan, Abraham told Lot it was best that they should part in order to keep peace between the herdsmen, and generously said to him, "Choose where thou shalt go. If thou wilt take the left hand I will go to the right and if thou depart to the right hand I will go to the left."

Lot looked around and saw that the plain of the Jordan river was rich in grass and would make a fine dwelling place for him and his herds. He made his choice at once.

After Lot had departed, Abraham stood alone on a mountain top and God promised He would give to him and his heirs all the land as far as he could see it, and that his descendants should be as many as the stars.

Now in those days a man could marry more than one wife, and Abraham had two. One was named Sarah, who had traveled with him from Ur, and the other was an Egyptian bondmaid belonging to Sarah named Hagar.

When Abraham was a very old man God gave Abraham and Hagar a son and they called the little lad Ishmael, meaning "God hears".

HAGAR AND HER SON

Now Abraham was exceedingly happy when Ishmael was born and Hagar, slave though she was, scorned the beautiful but childless Sarah.

Then one day God sent a son to Sarah also. This child they called Isaac, meaning "laughter", for, said Sarah, "The Lord has made my heart laugh."

When Isaac was about two years old Abraham made a great feast at the boy's weaning, and Sarah saw Ishmael, now sixteen years old, mocking her little son Isaac. She became so angry at this that she bade Abraham send both Hagar and Ishmael away, saying, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for her son shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And though it grieved his heart to do so, at dawn next day Abraham gave a skin of water and some bread to Hagar and sent her and her son out of his tent.

The two wandered out into the wilderness and as the day passed they lost their way. The sun was very hot and Ishmael wanted water, but there was no more for him in the skin. Their bread too was gone. His mother laid him in the shade of a bush and while he cried in distress she went a little way from him to hide her tears for she loved her boy devotedly and could not bear to see him die.

As she sat there weeping an angel of God said, "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thy arms; for I will make him a great nation."

As she raised her eyes, she saw a well of water. She ran and filled her bottle and hastened to give the lad a drink.

And God was kind to Ishmael and he grew and made his home in the woods, and became skilful with the bow.

HAGAR AND HER SON

THOUGH IT GRIEVED HIS HEART TO DO SO, AT DAWN THE NEXT DAY ABRAHAM GAVE A SKIN OF WATER AND SOME BREAD TO HAGAR AND SENT HER AND HER SON OUT OF HIS TENT

THE MAN OF FAITH

IT was God's wish to test the faith of Abraham to him, so He said to him, "Take now thy son Isaac, thine only one, whom thou lovest, go into the land of Moriah, and offer him as a burnt-offering on one of the mountains I shall tell thee of."

Now it was not a hard task to kill a lamb and burn it on an altar of heaped-up stones so the smoke of it should rise up to God, like praise from the hearts of men. Men often did that to show their love to God in those days. But how could Abraham take his own dear son Isaac, lay him on the wood and let him be consumed like a lamb? Yet God commanded him to do it, and Abraham knew it was safe for him to do as God said.

In the dawn Abraham cut the wood the right length for the sacrifice, saddled his ass and set out for the mount of which God had spoken, taking with him two servants and Isaac, his son. On the third day they saw the place afar off, and as they drew near the hill-top Abraham took the wood for the sacrifice from the back of the ass and laid it on Isaac's back, and he placed in his hands the pan of fire and the knife.

"Abide ye here with the ass," Abraham said to the two servants. "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

And the two went on up the mount, side by side.

Now Isaac did not know what the Lord had told Abraham to do, and he said, "Father!"

And Abraham replied, "Here am I, my son!"

"Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

"My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering," replied Abraham.

And the two went on up the mount, side by side.

When they came to the place which God had told him about, Abraham piled up the stones for an altar and arranged the wood upon it. He stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son but the angel of the Lord called to him, "Abraham, Abraham!"

And Abraham answered, "Here am I!"

The Lord said, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me."

Abraham raised his eyes and saw behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. He took it and laid it on the wood and offered it as a burnt-offering instead of Isaac. Then together father and son listened while the angel renewed all the promises God had made to Abraham, and rejoicing they descended the mountain to their tent-home.

REBEKAH AT THE WELL

MORE than twenty years passed by, in which time Sarah died and her son Isaac came into manhood. Abraham wished him to marry, yet did not desire him to choose a girl from the land of Canaan where the people served strange gods. As Isaac must not leave the land of his inheritance, Abraham called his chief servant and told him to go to Haran, where they used to live, and bring back a young girl from Abraham's own kindred to be the wife of his son Isaac.

The servant loaded ten camels with gifts of gold and beautiful clothes and after many days the caravan reached its destination. The thirsty camels knelt down by the well outside the city and the weary servant and his camel drivers dismounted. As the servant waited, he prayed to God, saying, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, grant that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be the one thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac."

Now it was evening, the time when the women went to draw water from the well, and it happened that while he was praying a beautiful girl named Rebekah, young and sweet of face, tripped lightly down the steps of the well, filled her pitcher and came up again.

Abraham's servant hastened to meet her and said, "I pray thee let me drink a little water from thy pitcher."

And she answered quickly, "Drink, my lord!"

When he had had his fill, she emptied her pitcher into the trough where the animals drank, saying, "I will draw water for thy camels also until they have done drinking."

REBEKAH AT THE WELL

AFTER THE SERVANT RELATED ALL HE HAD DONE, ISAAC LED REBEKAH INTO THE TENT OF HIS MOTHER SARAH, AND SHE BECAME HIS WIFE

Again and again she returned to the well to draw water for the camels, and the servant wondered at her kindness of heart. When the animals had finished drinking, he took golden earrings and bracelets from among the gifts his ten camels had brought and put them on her, and asked if there would be room in her father's house for him that night.

Rebekah replied that she was the daughter of Bethuel, and that they had both straw and forage enough for the camels and room for lodging.

Then the servant bowed down his head and worshipped God, for he knew God had prospered his journey.

Rebekah ran home and told those there all that had happened when she went for water. Her brother Laban hurried back to the well and, finding both men and camels as Rebekah had said, exclaimed, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord! Wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house and room for the camels."

After the servant had unloaded his camels and he and his men had had water to wash their feet, a supper was set before them, but the servant said that he must state his errand before he ate. Once again Rebekah's mother and brother listened to the story of the meeting at the well. Then the servant asked if they were willing that the beautiful maiden should go back with him to marry Isaac.

Laban and Bethuel both answered that it surely was God's plan and they could not take it upon themselves to say yes or no. So the servant brought out gold and silver vessels and rich garments for Rebekah and presented precious gifts to Laban and Rebekah's mother, after which

he and his men ate and drank and rested through the night.

The next morning they prepared for their departure and after farewells had been said, Rebekah, her nurse and her handmaidens mounted their camels and formed part of the caravan which journeyed toward Canaan.

Now Isaac was living in the South Country, and one evening as he walked in the fields he lifted up his eyes and behold! camels were coming from the north. Rebekah saw him and following the custom of women in those days, covered herself with a veil and dismounted until he should pass by. Turning to the servant, she asked, "What man is this that walketh in the fields to meet us?"

"It is my master!" he replied.

Then she went to meet Isaac, and after the servant had related all he had done, Isaac led Rebekah into the tent of his mother Sarah, and she became his wife and he loved her.

ESAU AND JACOB

FOR twenty years no little children played around the tents where Isaac and Rebekah lived. Then twin boys were born and named Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first-born. In those days the first-born son had what was called the birth-right. This made him chief of all the rest, and heir to most of his father's wealth.

When the lads were fifteen years old, their grandfather Abraham died at the good old age of one hundred and seventy-five. Their uncle Ishmael came from out of the wilderness, many of his archers with him, and the two brothers, Isaac and Ishmael, buried their father in the same cave they had chosen long years before as the resting-place for Sarah. Then Ishmael, man of the desert, swept back to the desert and to the wild life he followed.

When the twin boys grew to be men, Esau took to the fields and to outdoor sports, while Jacob was a plain man and dwelt in tents. Isaac was fond of Esau, who killed the deer and brought him the meat to eat, but Rebekah was more fond of Jacob.

One day Jacob had prepared some food called pottage, and as Esau came in from the field, he said, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that pottage, for I am faint."

"Sell me thy birth-right," Jacob bargained.

Esau replied, "I am at the point of death; what good will a birth-right do me?"

So he sold his birth-right to Jacob—which was a wrong thing for him to do—and took the bread and meat, ate and drank, and then went on his way.

Now there came a time when Isaac's eyes grew so dim he could not see, and he summoned Esau to his side and

said, "My son, I am old and know not how many days I shall live. I pray thee, take thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the fields and take a deer. Bring the venison and make me a savory dish such as I love, that I may eat and that I may bless thee before I die."

Rebekah overheard Isaac talking to Esau and she told Jacob about it, adding, "Go now to the flock and fetch me from thence two good kids, and I will make such a dish as thy father loves. Thou shalt carry it to him that he may eat and that he may bless thee ere his death."

ISAAC SPEAKING TO ESAU

"But Esau is a hairy man and I am a smooth man," Jacob reminded her. "Peradventure my father will feel me and I may bring a curse down upon myself instead of a blessing."

"Upon me be the curse," replied Rebekah. "Only obey me; fetch the kids."

So Jacob did as his mother suggested and brought the kids to his mother that she might cook them in a way that would please the good man of the house.

Then Rebekah put some of Esau's clothes on Jacob, and put the skins of goats on his hands and upon the smooth of his neck, for Esau was shaggy with hair. Then Jacob took the meat and the bread and went in to his father.

"Who art thou, my son?" asked Isaac as he heard footsteps.

"I am Esau, thy first-born," said Jacob. "Rise, I pray thee, and eat of the deer's meat I have brought that thy soul may bless me."

"How is it that thou hast found it so soon, my son?"

"The Lord thy God brought it my way," was Jacob's explanation.

"Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, and know if thou be my son Esau or not." When Jacob went near to his father and he had felt him, he said in evident perplexity, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

After he asked once more, "Art thou in truth my son Esau?" and Jacob declared, "I am," Isaac seemed satisfied and said, "Bring near the food and I will eat of my son's venison that my soul may bless thee."

Then Jacob brought the tempting food to his father and he ate, and he brought him wine, and he drank.

After the repast his father said, "Come near now and kiss me, my son."

And Jacob gave him the kiss. Then the old man asked

God to bless this young man whom he thought was his first-born, and make him great and give him all good things.

Jacob had scarcely gone out of his father's presence when Esau came in from his hunting. He brought in a choice dish of meat and said, "Let my father rise and eat of the flesh of the deer, that thy soul may bless me."

"Who art thou?" Isaac asked in amazement.

Esau replied, "I am thy son, thy first-born son, Esau."

Then Isaac shook like a leaf and said, "Who? Where is he that took deer's meat and brought it to me so that I did eat ere this and bless him? Yea, and he shall be blessed."

When Esau heard these words, he cried out bitterly and said, "Bless me too, O my father!"

But Isaac sadly declared he could not take from Jacob what was now his—even though he had won it through fraud.

Thinking it over and over again, Esau said in his heart, "Jacob first obtained my birth-right. Now he has obtained my blessing. My father will soon die and then after the days of mourning I will kill Jacob."

Somehow Rebekah heard about this and she sent hurriedly for Jacob and said that as Esau meant to kill him, he must leave home at once, go to her brother Laban and stay until Esau's wrath had cooled.

So Jacob fled from Beersheba, his home, and as he went on his eastward way, the third day he found himself on a rugged hillside at sunset time. The day had been tiresome and he was quite worn out. Taking a stone for

his pillow, he lay down and soon slept. And while he slumbered he had a strange dream. The great stones of the place had piled themselves up like a ladder into the heavens and bright angels went up and down the steps. The Lord stood at the top and said, "I am with thee and will take care of thee, and will bring thee back to this land, for I will not leave thee till I have done that which I told thee of."

Jacob woke up out of his sleep and said, "'Tis true the Lord is in this place and I knew it not." And he was in great fear in the stillness of the night and exclaimed, "This is the house of God; this is the gate of heaven!"

In the early morning he rose up, took the stone he had used for a pillow and set it up on end, pouring oil on top of it. He gave to that place the name of Bethel and made a vow to love and serve God all the rest of his life.

And though Jacob had done wrong, God forgave him and he was known as a great and good man.

JACOB AND RACHEL

AS Jacob went on his way to the east he came to a well near which three shepherds were waiting to water their flocks, for over the mouth of the well lay a great stone which took more than three to roll away. So these men awaited the arrival of more shepherds at high noon.

Approaching the shepherds, Jacob said to them, "Whence do ye come?"

When they told him they were from Haran town, he asked, "Know ye Laban, the son of Nahor?"

And they said, "We know him."

Jacob inquired eagerly, "Is he well?" to which they answered, "He is well, and there is one of his daughters now, coming this way with her flock."

While Jacob was speaking with the men, Rachel came up. When Jacob saw her beauty he rolled the stone from the mouth of the well, feeling that he had the strength of ten men, and watered her whole flock. Then as soon as he told her he was Rebekah's son, Rachel ran home and told her father all the news. Laban hurried to meet Jacob, threw his arms around his neck and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And for a month Jacob dwelt with him.

Then having seen Jacob's skill as a shepherd, Laban said to him, "Because thou art my brother, it is not right for thee to serve me for nothing. Tell me how much shall I pay thee?"

Now Laban had two daughters—Leah and Rachel. Leah was the older, Rachel the younger. Rachel was both beautiful and winsome and Jacob loved her, so he answered, "I will serve thee seven years for Rachel if thou

RACHEL AND JACOB AT THE WELL

wilt give me her for a wife."

Laban said it would please him to do so, and Jacob served seven years for Rachel. So great was his love for her that the time seemed to him but a few days.

At the end of the seven years Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife for I have served thee my full time."

Then Laban made a feast and brought in Leah to be Jacob's wife. Jacob received his bride hidden in her wedding veil, for in those days a man could not look on the face of his bride until the day following the wedding. Thus Jacob did not discover the ruse till the next morn. Then he came in great wrath to Laban, saying, "What is this thou hast done unto me? Did I not serve thee for Rachel? And why didst thou cheat me?"

Laban replied, "In our land the older sister must wed before the younger. Serve me seven years more and thou shalt have Rachel for a wife."

And Jacob did this, and though he dwelt with both—which was thought to be no sin in those days—his love for Rachel was far greater than for Leah.

Leah bore Jacob a number of sons but it was many years ere Rachel had a child, and this caused her grief. But at last she had a baby and called him Joseph. As soon as Joseph was born Jacob told Laban to give him his wives and all the goods that he owned and let him go back to the land from whence he came. Laban begged him to stay. He had found, he said, that the Lord blessed him for Jacob's sake and if he would still serve him he might have some of the land and part of the flocks. So Jacob took care of Laban's flocks and had sheep and goats of his own. For a time things went well, but one day Jacob heard Laban's sons say some hard things about him, and he saw that Laban did not look upon him as kindly as he used to do. He felt the time had come for them to part. And the Lord told Jacob to return to the land he came from and He would deal well with him. Jacob took his wives, his children, his flocks, and his goods and set out for the land of Canaan.

He sent a messenger to his brother Esau to say that he was on his way home and hoped to find grace in his sight.

The servant brought back word that Esau was on his way to meet Jacob with a large force of men. Jacob thought of the wrongs he had done his brother twenty years before and of course was in great fear of him. He

sought the help of God, and God told him exactly what to do. So Jacob sent great droves of sheep and goats, and ewes and rams, and camels and colts, and cows, and the choice ones from all his livestock, as a gift to Esau.

One night when no one else was near, a strange man came to Jacob and wound his arms around him and tried to throw him. All night long they wrestled together. When the unknown man saw he had not conquered Jacob, he struck him on the thigh and Jacob's hip was put out of joint. But in spite of his lameness Jacob grimly fought on and when the dawn came the man exclaimed, "Let me go! Day is breaking!"

But Jacob answered, "I will not let thee go until thou hast blessed me."

"What is thy name?" the man asked.

"Jacob," was the reply.

"Jacob shall be thy name no longer, but thou shalt be called Israel, 'God's wrestler', for as a prince thou hast power with God and men and hast prevailed."

And when he had blessed Jacob, the stranger went his way. Then Jacob gave the name of the place Peniel, meaning "God's face", for said he, "Here I have seen God face to face, and my life has been spared." Jacob knew by this that his brother Esau would not kill him.

When Jacob was an old, old man, Rachel bore him another son and the father called him Benjamin, "son of my right hand". And the mother Rachel died, and they buried her by the roadside as one goes up to Bethlehem. Above her grave Jacob set a pillar in her memory, for his love for her was exceedingly great.

JOSEPH IS SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS

JACOB had twelve sons but more than all the others he loved Joseph. When he was about seventeen years old, Jacob gave him a fine coat of many colors. This did not please the rest of the sons, and they showed their dislike of Joseph in all sorts of ways.

One night Joseph had a strange dream and in the morning he told it to his brothers, saying, "As we bound sheaves in the field, lo, my sheaf rose up and stood very straight. Your sheaves stood round and bowed down to my sheaf."

Then his brothers were angry and said, "Do you think you shall reign over us?" and their dislike for him grew apace.

It was not long after this Joseph had another dream, in which he saw the sun and moon and eleven stars bow down to him. When he told it in the morning to his father and his eleven brothers, even his father took him to task and said, "Are all of us to bow down to the earth to thee?"

Now Jacob had large flocks of sheep and goats at Shechem and all of his sons but Joseph had gone there to feed them. They stayed away so long that Jacob became worried and he said to Joseph, "Go and see if it be well with thy brethren and with the flocks, and bring me back word."

Joseph put on his beautiful coat of many colors and went as far as Dothan, the low green hill of the Two Wells, before he found them. While he was a long way off, his brothers saw him coming and they plotted a way in which they might be rid of him.

JOSEPH IS SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS

"Come, let us kill him," they said, "and throw him into one of the cisterns and say a wild beast ate him up. Then we shall see what will become of his dreams."

"IS THIS THY SON'S COAT?"

But his oldest brother Reuben would not consent.

"Let us not kill the lad. Shed no blood; but drop him into this cistern," he suggested for he meant to bear him home safely to his father.

When Joseph joined the rest of his brothers, they sprang upon the unsuspecting lad, stripped off his beautiful coat and lowered him into the cistern in which there was no water, as often was the case in this land.

As the brothers sat down to eat, they looked up and saw some Ishmaelite traders riding by on camels, bound for Egypt to sell spices and balm and myrrh. One brother

suggested, "Let us not kill the lad, for he is of our own flesh, but let us sell him to these men."

The others thought it a good scheme, so they hailed the travelers, drew Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for a small sum, and he was carried on to Egypt.

The brothers killed a kid and dipped Joseph's beautiful coat in its blood. Carrying it home to Jacob, they said, "This have we found; is it thy son's coat?"

At the sight Jacob wept and tore his clothes, saying, "It is my son's coat; some wild beast hath devoured him!"

And Jacob mourned for Joseph many days.

The traders who bought Joseph took him down to Egypt and there sold him as a slave to Potiphar, an officer of the king's guard. The king of Egypt was always known as Pharaoh, a name he took when he was crowned.

And the Lord was with Joseph, who served Potiphar so well that finally the rich man put him in charge of his home and lands. But Potiphar's wife told false tales, and Joseph, who had really done no wrong, was thrust into jail. But there too God was with Joseph, and the captain of the prison entrusted many things to his charge and permitted Joseph to go in and out of the ward as he chose.

Now it happened that Pharaoh fell out with his butler and chief cook and they were jailed in the same place as Joseph. Joseph was appointed to attend upon them, and one morning after they had been prisoners for perhaps a year, Joseph saw they were sad and asked the reason.

"We have had dreams," they replied, "and there is no one to tell us what they mean."

"Tell me them, I pray you," said Joseph.

Then the chief butler said, "In my dream I saw a vine that put forth three branches and brought forth ripe grapes."

"This is the interpretation," said Joseph. "In three days Pharaoh will release thee and put thee back in thy place and thou shalt serve him as of old. Think of me when thou art happy, and if thou wilt speak of me to the king, I will be brought out of this house."

This the butler promised he would do.

Next the chief cook recounted his dream, saying, "In my dream I carried three wicker baskets on my head. In the top one were all sorts of baked meats for the king and the birds were eating out of the basket."

Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation. In three days Pharaoh will take off thy head and hang thee on a tree and the birds will eat thy flesh."

The third day was the king's birthday and he made a great feast. He restored the chief butler to his place, but hung the chief cook, just as Joseph had said he would do. But the chief butler gave not a thought to Joseph nor spoke one good word for him to the king as he had promised he would do.

Two years from this time the king had a dream and he sent for all the wise men to tell him what it meant.

Then the chief butler related to the king how, when he was in jail, there was a young Jew who had correctly interpreted his dream.

The king summoned Joseph at once and said, "I have had a dream which no one can read for me. I have learned thou hast a gift to explain a dream."

"Not I," said Joseph, "but God will answer Pharaoh."

"In my dream," said Pharaoh, "I stood on the bank of the Nile and seven fat cows came up out of the river and fed in a field near by. Then seven lean cows came up. The lean cows ate up the fat cows, yet no one would have known it for they were just as lean as when first I saw them. Then I woke, but soon slept again.

"Again I dreamed and saw seven ears of corn, full and good, growing on one stalk. Then seven other ears empty and shrivelled by the east winds sprang up after them. And the poor ears ate up the good ears."

Joseph said, "For seven years there will be no lack of food in the land and all will go well. Then will come a time of great want and many will starve to death. What Pharaoh has dreamed twice, God will do quickly.

"Let the king choose a wise man to see that corn is laid up in the land during the seven abundant years so there will be no lack of food in the years when the crops are small."

And the king said to Joseph, "Since God hath showed thee all this, there is none so wise as thou art," and he put him in charge of all the land of Egypt and he ranked next to the king. From his own hand the king took a ring and put it on Joseph's hand, clothed him in fine garments and hung a gold chain about his neck. When Joseph rode out men bowed the knee and his word was law in all the land.

The slave boy had become a man of power.

JOSEPH MEETS HIS BROTHERS

THIRTEEN years had passed since the Ishmaelite traders had bought the boy Joseph for twenty pieces of silver on Dothan's green hillside. The baby Benjamin had grown into a sturdy lad, the joy of Jacob's life. The seven years of plenty were come, and the earth yielded abundant harvests. Joseph, now the man of power in Egypt, went through the land building great barns and filling them with grain.

Then the great famine came. Hunger was everywhere. But there was plenty of grain in Egypt. There the barns were thrown open and from far and wide people came to buy corn.

Far away in Hebron Jacob heard how corn could be had in Egypt so he told his sons to go down and buy that they might not starve to death.

Ten of his sons went, but Jacob kept Benjamin at home for fear he would be lost to him as Joseph had been.

When the ten men were ushered into Joseph's presence, they bowed down to the ground. Joseph knew them at once though they did not recognize the king's high officer as their own brother. As they bowed before him, Joseph remembered his dreams of the sheaves and the stars.

Joseph spoke to them in a rough voice, saying, "Whence come ye?" to which they replied, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

"Ye are spies!" cried Joseph, "and have come to see how poor the land is!"

"Nay, my lord, but to buy food are we come. We are all one man's sons and we are true men; never have we been spies."

But Joseph insisted. They in turn repeated, "Twelve brothers are we, sons of one man. Young Benjamin is at home with our father, and one brother is dead."

Then Joseph said, "Go prove ye are not spies. Let one of the ten that are here go and fetch the young lad Benjamin," and he put them all in prison for three days. The third day he sent for them and said, "Let one of you be bound and kept in the guard-house while the rest of you take home the corn you need."

They agreed, and he took his brother Simeon from their midst, had him bound and put in the guard-house.

He sent word to his servants to fill their sacks with corn, and when they were resting on their journey one brother opened his sack for forage. There he found the price of the corn. Then each of them discovered his silver had been returned in the same way. Thus did Joseph do good to those who had done ill to him.

When Jacob's nine sons reached home they recounted all that had befallen them and how they had left Simeon a captive with the lord of the land until their return with Benjamin.

Jacob cried out in bitterness, "Benjamin shall not go down with you! Joseph is dead, Simeon gone, and now you take Benjamin from me! If harm should come to him, I should die of grief."

But when the supply of corn the brothers had brought from Egypt was exhausted, there was nothing left to Jacob but to say to his sons, "Go once more to Egypt and buy food."

But Judah exclaimed, "The man swore we should not

THE MEETING OF JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN

see his face if Benjamin was not with us. If thou wilt send him with us, we will go."

Then Jacob yielded. "If it must be so, take Benjamin with you and may God grant you favor in the man's eyes that he may send my two sons back to me," he said.

So the nine brothers took Benjamin and went down to Egypt and stood face to face with Joseph once more.

They presented the gifts they had brought—honey, spices, balm and almond nuts—and bowed down to the earth. Joseph asked how they all were and if their father was well. When he saw young Benjamin with them he said, "Is this the young brother?" and turning to the lad, exclaimed, "God be good to thee, my son!"

And Joseph's heart was so full at sight of the lad and his longing to throw his arms around him so great that

he hastened to leave the room in order to conceal his tears.

Having washed his face to remove the signs of weeping, he returned and had a feast set out at noon and all ate and drank and were merry. When the time came for his guests to leave, Joseph commanded the steward to fill their sacks with corn and to put their money back in the mouths of their sacks. "And put my cup, the silver cup," he added, "in the sack's mouth of the youngest with his corn money."

This was done, and when the brothers had gone out of the city early the next morning Joseph said to his servant, "Up! Follow and say to them, 'My lord's cup is lost. He who has it shall be my lord's bondsman!' "

When the man overtook Jacob's sons he did all this and the men were instantly in a rage. "If the cup is found on one of us, kill him and make the rest of us slaves!" they offered.

As they spoke each one cast his sack on the ground and loosened it at the top.

Imagine their consternation when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack! They rent their clothes and in great grief went back to Joseph's house and fell down at his feet.

Judah said, "God has found out our sin. Let us be your slaves, and take him as well in whose sack the cup was found."

Joseph answered, "God forbid! He with whom the cup was found shall stay and serve me, but the rest of you shall go in peace."

Then Judah, who had sworn to his father he would bring back the boy, said to Joseph, "If we go home and

our father sees the lad is not with us, he will die of grief. His life is bound up in the lad's life."

"Clear the hall!" Joseph ordered, unable to restrain himself longer, and when all had gone he said to his brothers, "Come near, I pray you."

And they came near and, weeping, he exclaimed, "I am Joseph whom ye sold into Egypt!" Seeing their troubled looks, he continued, "But grieve not that ye did this thing, for God did send me here that I might save your lives. Go home and tell my father God hath made me lord over all Egypt and bring him down to me at once."

Then he hung on Benjamin's neck and wept, and he kissed all his brothers and shed tears, but they were tears of joy. And after that his brothers talked with him.

When this story reached the ears of Pharaoh, he bade Joseph send wagons up to Hebron for the women and children. So in the ox wagons of Pharaoh Jacob journeyed to Egypt with his sons, their wives and children. And Joseph went out in his chariot to meet them and Jacob threw himself on Joseph's neck in great rejoicing. And seeing that Joseph's people were shepherds, Pharaoh settled them in the land of Goshen, which was green with grass for the flocks.

THE BABY MOSES

THE people of Israel still lived in Egypt although Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's brothers had been dead for many, many years. They had now become a mighty people and the land of Goshen was filled with them.

Another King Pharaoh was on the throne, and he saw there were more Jews in the land than there ought to be for safety of the Egyptians. If war should break out and these Jews should take sides with the foes of Pharaoh, they would be sure to win. So he set them hard tasks and made them bear great loads and did all he could to vex them. But still they grew in strength. The more he oppressed them, the more they increased in numbers. God had said they were to be as the stars in the sky and as the sands of the sea that no one could count. Pharaoh tried to stop this thing by making a law that if a boy child was born to the Jews it should be put to death at once, but a girl child might live. This was a great grief to the Jews who were now slaves to the Egyptian king, and they grew afraid to let the Egyptians know when a new baby came to them.

One day the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe in the stream that ran near the palace, and her maids accompanied her. As she stood on the shore of the Nile she caught sight of a small basket boat hid in the reeds. She sent her maids to fetch it out, and she looked in the basket. There lay a baby! It cried and the princess tried to soothe it, but the baby only cried the more at the sound of a strange voice. The princess took pity upon it and said, "This is a Hebrew child."

She had spoken aright for the baby's mother had kept it hidden for three months. Then when it was no longer

THE BABY MOSES

FINDING THE BABY MOSES

possible to conceal the child, she had fashioned the little basket boat, put the baby in it among the reeds by the river's edge and set the baby's sister to watch at a distance.

Seeing the princess had discovered her brother, the lass hurried up and when she overheard the princess say, "It is a Hebrew child," she made bold to ask, "Shall I bring thee a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for thee?"

The princess said, "Yes, go."

The maid brought her own and the baby's mother, to whom the princess said, "Take the child and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee for it."

The baby grew and was brought down to Pharaoh's house and the princess made him her son and gave him the name of Moses which means "drawn out". "I drew him out of the water," she said.

MOSES THE LEADER

FOUR hundred years had gone since Jacob had journeyed down to Egypt to live there with his son Joseph. The lot of the Jews was a hard one—they were slaves. But God heard their cry, and remembered his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

One day when Moses was near forty years old, as he walked abroad he was pondering how he could better the condition of his own people, the Jews. Seeing an Egyptian strike a Jew as he worked, his anger rose. He looked this way and that way and when he perceived no one was near he slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. The next day when he went out he saw two Jews at strife and said, "Why do you wrong one the other? You are brethren."

The stronger man answered, "Who made thee our judge? Dost thou want to kill me as thou didst the Egyptian?"

Then Moses was in great fear, for he had thought no one knew about his deed. The story reached the ears of the king, who knew it was a danger signal and sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled to the south through the desert into the land of Midian. It was there he took Zipporah, "little bird", the daughter of Jethro, for his wife. Jethro owned many sheep, and Moses, who became shepherd of them, learned the secrets of mountain and valley, field and stream.

One day as Moses led his flock out in search of pasture he came to Mount Sinai, "the mountain of God". Among the rocks he saw an acacia bush in a blaze of fire but for all the flame neither branch nor leaf was burned in the least.

As he drew near in wonder at the sight, the Lord spoke to him out of the flame, and Moses hid his face for he dared not look on God.

The Lord said, "The cry of the children of Israel has come up to me and I have seen how ill they have been used. I will send thee to Pharaoh that thou mayst lead them out of Egypt."

MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH

But Moses protested, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to lead the children of Israel?"

Then the Lord said to Moses, "What is in thine hand?"

"A rod," replied Moses.

"Throw it on the ground," God commanded, and as

Moses threw it, the rod was changed to a snake and Moses fled from it.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Put out thine hand and take it by the tail," and when Moses did, again it was a rod in his hand.

"That shall be a sign that I have appeared to thee," declared the Lord.

Then Moses said, "O my Lord, I am not fit to do this work for I am slow of speech and a man of few words."

Then the Lord was angry with Moses and said, "Is not Aaron thy brother? He is now on his way to meet thee. Thou shalt tell him what to say and do and he shall speak to the people for thee. With this rod in thy hand thou shalt do great things, as if thou wert God."

So Moses took his wife and sons and put them on an ass and traveled back to Egypt with the rod of God in his hand.

Arriving in Egypt, Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh. They told him God wished Moses to lead the Israelites to another country and asked him to allow them to depart. But Pharaoh was angry and refused to give them permission to leave his country. You see the Israelites made bricks and built cities for him, and great store-houses in which to keep grain. They were very useful to him.

Then God sent many troubles to the Egyptians. The water of the rivers turned into blood; the fish died; there came a plague of frogs over all the land; lice and flies made food unfit to eat and life not worth the living. The cattle died, crops were scanty and rain and hail destroyed what

little grew. One thing after another God did to punish the Egyptians.

Last of all God told Moses that each family among the Israelites should kill a lamb and roast it for their suppers, taking the blood of the lamb and marking their door posts with it. That night the death angel came and passed over the land. Wherever he saw the door posts marked he passed over that household, but in all the other homes the oldest child died, from the magnificent palace of Pharaoh himself to the poorest Egyptian home in the land.

Beholding all this death and grief, Pharaoh ordered Moses to take the Israelites and leave Egypt. So quickly did they obey that the women carried the dough with them, not even waiting long enough to bake it into bread.

The Bible says, "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light."

They traveled until they came to the shore of the Red Sea, and there as they rested they saw the Egyptians coming in pursuit of them. The sight threw them into great dismay, and they cried out, blaming Moses that he had brought them into such straits. But Moses remembered God had said, "Certainly I will be with thee," and he spoke to his frightened people, saying, "Fear ye not; stand still, and see what the Lord will do to save you."

And in the Bible where we read the wonderful story it says that Moses stretched his hand out over the sea, the east wind began to blow, and it blew back the waters of the sea so that the Israelites went across to the other shore on a path of dry ground, and all the time they were cross-

ing a thick cloud of darkness hid them from the Egyptians.

When Pharaoh and his hosts hurried after them, the waves were let loose and the king and his horsemen were swept out of sight.

The Israelites pressed on and found the new country a wilderness. Great rocky mountains opposed them sometimes and wide wastes of sand stretched before them at others, with only now and then palm trees and growing green things and springs of water to invite them to rest and refreshment.

One day as they traveled on they found the grain they had brought with them from Egypt was almost gone. There arose a great clamor for food. That night after Moses had talked with God, quails flew into camp. Thus the people had all the meat they wished to eat.

The next morning the dew lay heavy, and when it rose as mist the ground was covered with tiny round objects that looked like seeds. Moses explained it was food God had sent and that they were to gather all that they would need for one day, but no more. The Israelites took baskets, bowls and jars and gathered, calling it "manna". Some of it they boiled and some they ground into flour. The cakes made of it were very good and were sweet to the taste like honey. The Israelites were commanded by God to destroy the manna that was left each day, depending on Him to send new in the morning. When this was not done they always found the manna spoiled and unfit to eat. On the sixth day they were to gather enough for two days, for no manna fell on the Day of Rest.

Thus taken care of by God, they journeyed three

months until they came to a mountain both steep and high. At its foot stretched a broad plain and here they decided to camp and rest. The mountain was called Sinai, and the Israelites were never to forget it for it was here God spoke to them.

One day Moses told them to wash their garments and be ready on the third day, for then God would come down in the sight of all the people.

They made themselves ready, and on the morning of the third day thunder and lightning played about the mountain while a heavy cloud covered its top and there sounded the voice of a trumpet. Then all the people in camp knew God was calling and they gathered to the foot of the mountain. Moses alone went up, and there God gave him two blocks of stone on which were the Ten Laws or Commandments the people were to remember and obey.

Now while Moses was on the mountain, face to face with God, those he had led out of Egypt were in camp at the foot. And Moses tarried so long the people grew impatient and decided he would not come back. So they said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods that shall lead us on."

The Bible does not tell us whether or no Aaron argued against it. All we do know is that he bade them to throw into the fire all the gold jewelry they had and when they did so, he fashioned a golden calf and built an altar before it, such as he had seen in Egypt.

When God saw this He was displeased and said to Moses, "Go get thee down! Thy people which thou hast brought out of Egypt have corrupted themselves!"

Moses was so angry when he saw what they had done

that he cast out of his hands the blocks of stone on which the laws were written, and they broke. His heart was hot with anger and he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire, ground it to dust and, scattering it in the mountain stream, made the people drink of it. The Lord told Moses to hew out two blocks of stone like the first, and when he carried them to the top of the mountain the Lord wrote on them the Ten Laws which they were to keep if they would reach the land He had promised them.

The Israelites were more than forty years on the road, and Aaron died on the way. At last God brought Moses and his people to the banks of the Jordan river which they would have to cross to reach Canaan, the land they sought. While they were there, Moses went to the top of Mount Nebo to talk with God, who told him how large the land was that He would give to the children of Israel. He said Moses should look upon it, but that it was His will he should not step foot in the land. Moses died on Mount Nebo and no one knows where his grave was made.

JOSHUA

WHEN Moses died the Lord said unto Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over Jordan, thou and all this people. As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor will I forsake thee. Only be thou strong and of good courage."

PASSING THROUGH THE JORDAN

Joshua sent word through camp that in three days they would cross the river Jordan, and it happened that when they set foot in the stream the waters stood back as they did in the Red Sea and they went across dry shod. The Israelites made their camp near Jericho and as there was no lack of food in the good land, the Lord ceased to rain down manna for them to eat.

Now Jericho was a city with a great wall around it, but the Lord told Joshua to have no fear for the Israelites were to capture the city. All their men of war were to

THERE WAS A MIGHTY SHOUT AND THE CITY WALL FELL

march round the town once each day for six days. The seventh day they were to march round the town seven times, and the priests were to blow the trumpets. When the men of Israel heard a long, loud blast they were all to give a great shout, the wall would fall and they could take the city. Joshua warned them to make no noise with their voices until he commanded them to shout. When the trumpets blew the last time, Joshua cried, "Shout! the Lord is with us!" There was a mighty shout, the wall fell, they captured the town, and Joshua's fame spread near and far.

SAMSON

AFTER the Israelites had taken Jericho and all the land of Canaan, they did not drive all the conquered people out as they should have done but made friends with them and so were led into sin and the worship of strange gods. Finally the Israelites were not much better than slaves to the Philistines.

At this time there was a man among the Israelites named Manoah, and both he and his wife loved God. An angel came to them and said that they would have a son who was to serve the Lord and do his work, that he should taste no wine or strong drink, and that his hair should go uncut from his birth. When the baby was born he was called Samson, meaning "the man of the sun".

When he was grown he fell in love with a Philistine woman and as he and his father and mother were journeying to her home at Tinmuth to ask her father for her, a young lion rushed out and roared at the young man. Samson threw his arms round the beast and choked him as easily as if he had been a young kid.

Some months later as they came back over the same road to the wedding he turned off to look at the lion and found a swarm of bees in the white skeleton. He took some of the honey back to his father and mother and they went on their way eating of it.

Thirty young men of Tinmuth were bidden to his wedding feast and Samson made a riddle, promising gifts to them if they should guess it, or if they were unable they were to give him gifts.

"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" was the riddle.

The seventh day came and none of the thirty guests had found the answer. They went to Samson's wife and threatened to burn her father's house if she did not make Samson tell her the answer, which was a swarm of bees having their hive in the skeleton of a lion. So when they two were alone, she coaxed until Samson yielded and told her, but when he found she had betrayed his confidence he was so vexed he went home without her.

After his wrath cooled he went again to Tinmuth, only to find his wife had married one of the thirty guests. It was harvest time, and to punish them he caught three hundred foxes, tied their tails together and, placing a lighted torch between their tails, let them loose in the corn. The standing stalks took fire and the flames spread quickly to the olive trees and vines and much damage was done.

When the Philistines found out it was Samson's deed they took his wife and her father and burned them to death. In revenge Samson fought and slew a host of the Philistines and then fled to the top of a high rock called Etan to live. There a crowd of men went up with a rush and said to Samson, "We have come to bind thee that we may give thee into the hands of the Philistines."

Samson made them swear they would not put him to death and they bound him with strong cords and brought him down from the stronghold. As they drew near the camp of the Philistines, the Lord gave Samson such strength that he broke the cords from his arms as if they had been burnt threads, and he took up the jawbone of an ass and with it he fought the Philistines, slaying a host of them.

SAMSON IN DELILAH'S HOUSE

Far and wide the people feared Samson and once when he went to Gaza the Philistines who dwelt there shut the gates and kept watch near them all night. "When the day dawns, we will kill him," they planned. But in the dead of night Samson rose and went to the gates of the town, and when he found them closed he tore the heavy gates away from the wall—posts, bar and all—and carried them a long way off to the top of the hill.

Now Samson's hair had never been cut and it had grown thick and long. There was a woman named Delilah whom he loved, and the Philistines told her if she would find out how they might take Samson's strength from him, they would give her a large sum. The next time

Samson went to Delilah's house, she begged, "Tell me, I pray thee, what makes thee so strong, and with what thou couldst be bound and not break loose?"

At first Samson refused to tell her, then he deceived her, but at last he confessed that if his hair were shaved off he would loose all his strength.

Delilah knew this time that Samson spoke the truth and while he slept she had a man come and shave all the hair from his head. When this was done she cried out, "The Philistines seize thee, Samson!"

He awoke from his sleep and knew not his strength had left him.

Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes and carried him down to Gaza a prisoner. While in jail Samson had time to think of his sins and no doubt prayed to God to keep him, for his hair grew out and his strength returned. But the Philistines did not know this.

Now the Philistines had made their own god, and its name was Dagon. They thought that Dagon delivered Samson into their hands, and loud was their praise of him. All the Philistines met in a large house that had been built for Dagon that they might bow down to their god and give thanks. Poor blind Samson was brought in, and sat down in their midst for them to make sport of him in all sorts of ways.

Samson put his arms round two of the great posts that held up the house. And he bent down, and the house fell, and most of the Philistines were killed. Samson died with them, and by his death slew more of the foes of Israel than he had slain in all his life.

RUTH AND NAOMI

WHILE Israel was ruled by a judge whose name has not come down to us, a famine came on the land of Canaan because of a war or a drought, we know not which. And a Jew who dwelt in Bethlehem took his wife and two sons and went to the fertile uplands of Moab. His wife's name was Naomi. The man died while they were in Moab and Naomi lived with her sons. In a few years each of his sons took a wife, Orpah, "the fawn", and Ruth, "the friend". At the end of ten years the sons died, and Naomi was left in a strange land with neither husband nor sons.

When she heard God had sent bounteous crops to Israel and there was no lack of food there once more, a deep longing for the little hill town of Bethlehem and its white houses filled her heart. She decided to return there to live the rest of her days.

She told Orpah and Ruth her plan, and said, "Go each of you back to your mother's house, and the Lord deal kindly with you as ye have with the dead and with me. May he grant each of you rest in the house of a husband."

Then she kissed them but they wept aloud and they would go with her, but she bade them remain where they were. At last Orpah, with tears in her eyes, kissed Naomi farewell and returned to her own home. But Ruth clung to her and to persuade her, Naomi said, "Look, thy sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Do thou return with her."

Then Ruth proved her right to her name "the friend", saying, "Entreat me not to leave thee! Whither thou

"ENTREAT ME NOT TO LEAVE THEE!"

goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God."

Naomi argued no more; they went to the town of Bethlehem where Naomi used to live.

It was the time of year when the grain was ripe in the fields, and the men had gone out to cut it down.

Naomi had a kinsman in Bethlehem whose name was Boaz, a mighty man of wealth. And Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and glean the ears of corn."

It was the custom of that land for the poor who had no fields of their own to pick up or glean that which was left on the ground for them.

Naomi said, "Go, my daughter," and she went out and came to the field that was owned by the rich Boaz.

Boaz rode out from Bethlehem to watch his reapers at work and as he passed them as they toiled he gave the usual greeting, "The Lord be with you!" and they answered, "The Lord bless thee!"

When Boaz saw Ruth he asked his reapers who she was and where she came from. One of them said, "She came with Naomi from the land of Moab, and she said to us, 'I pray you, let me glean where the field has been reaped!' We told her she might, and she has been here since morning."

Boaz went over and spoke to Ruth for he was pleased because she had been so kind to Naomi, his kinswoman. "Go to no other field to glean, but remain here with my maid-servants and follow them as they reap. My young men shall not touch thee, and when thou art athirst, go to the water-jars and drink."

"Why have I found favor with thee?" asked Ruth, falling at his feet in gratitude.

"I know all thou hast done for thy mother-in-law, and how thou hast left thy father and mother and the land of thy birth to come to a country all unknown to thee. May the Lord repay thee!"

At meal-time, Boaz called her to eat with the reapers, and as she sat down with them, he gave her roasted corn and what she had left, she kept.

He told his reapers to leave grain on the ground on purpose as they worked so that she might gather it, and that was the real reason why, when she started for home

that evening, she was surprised at how much grain she had gleaned. When she reached home she related how kind Boaz had been and showed the barley to Naomi.

Each day Ruth went to the field of Boaz and gleaned there until all the grain was cut and in the barns, and Boaz watched her and learned to love her.

Now Naomi had some land she wished to sell. According to law, it must be sold to the nearest relative in her husband's family, so although Boaz was a relative and wished to buy the land he could not do so unless another, a nearer kinsman than he, refused to do so.

Boaz went and sat in the gateway of Bethlehem where the people gathered to do business, and when the other kinsman came he called him and ten men of the city together and said, "Sit ye down here." Then he recounted how Naomi wished to sell her land and concluded, turning to the other kinsman, "Buy it if you will, but if you will not, tell me that I may, as I am next nearest kinsman."

"Buy it on thine own account," was the reply. "Here is my shoe," for it was in this way, with a shoe, that a bargain was made hard and fast in those days.

Then Boaz said to all the men, "You are my witnesses that to-day I have bought the land that belonged to the husband of Naomi and her two sons, and that I have taken Ruth to be my wife."

All the people at the gate replied, "We are witnesses!"

So Boaz married Ruth. And when a son was born they called him Obed which means "serving", and Naomi was the baby's nurse. And Obed became the father of Jesse and Jesse became the father of David the king.

SAMUEL

THERE was a man named Elkanah who went up each year from the town of Ramah to a place called Shiloh to keep the feast of tabernacles. And his wife Hannah went with him.

Eli was high-priest at that time, and he saw Hannah on her knees weeping as she prayed. He spoke to her in a kind voice, saying, "May God grant thee what thou dost ask of Him."

Hannah rejoiced at the high-priest's words for she had asked God for a son.

Elkanah and Hannah returned to Ramah and the Lord gave Hannah a son, whom she called Samuel which means "asked of the Lord".

Samuel was only three or four years old when Hannah first took him up to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When they stood before Eli, Hannah said, "I am the woman that stood by thee here and prayed to the Lord for this child. The Lord heard me and so I have brought my son to the Lord; so long as he lives shall he be the child of God." And Samuel was left with Eli in the Lord's house, to help the high-priest as a boy might.

Now Eli had two sons, and they were priests in the Lord's house. But they were not fit for the place, for they did not obey God's laws. But Samuel, though a little boy, did what was right and pleasing to the Lord. Each year Hannah, his mother, made him a robe or coat to wear about his duties with Eli and brought it to him when she and her husband went up to Shiloh for the feast of green lodges.

Now Eli was an old man, and when he heard of all the

"SAMUEL! SAMUEL!"

evil things his sons had done, he did not drive them out of the Lord's house as was right, but allowed them to go on in their sins.

One night when Eli and Samuel lay down to sleep, the child heard a voice call, "Samuel!"

And he answered, "Here am I!" And he got up and ran to Eli, for he thought it was his voice. "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

Eli said, "I did not call thee, my son. Lie down again."

And the lad returned to his bed.

In a short time he heard the same voice say, "Samuel! Samuel!"

He rose at once, went to Eli and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

But Eli replied, "I did not call thee," and sent the lad back to his bed once more.

Samuel heard the voice the third time, "Samuel!

Samuel!" and he went to Eli and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

Then Eli knew it was the Lord who spoke to Samuel. He said to the lad, "Go, lie down and if He call thee, say, 'Speak, Lord, for I hear Thee.' "

Samuel went in and lay down in his place. And the Lord came for the fourth time, and called, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel said, "Speak, Lord, for I hear Thee."

And the Lord told Samuel all that he meant to do to the sons of Eli. They were to be put to death.

When Samuel opened the doors of the Lord's house at daylight, Eli asked, "What did the Lord say to thee?"

Samuel feared to answer, but when Eli said in his kind way, "I pray thee hide it not from me," he told Eli all the Lord had said.

Then Eli exclaimed, "It is the Lord; let Him do what He thinks best!"

And Samuel grew and the Lord was with him and it was known to all the people that he was one of God's prophets. And for many years after Eli died Samuel judged the people of Israel.

SAUL MADE KING

WHEN Samuel was an old man he set his two sons to judge Israel. But they were not just men and did not rule wisely. The wise men of Israel came to Samuel and protested, "Thou art now old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations around us."

Samuel was greatly displeased at this request for God had been the only king the Israelites had had. He showed them all they would suffer under such a rule, but the people insisted, "We will have a king over us!"

In deep distress, Samuel prayed to God about it, and God told him he should give them their way.

Now there was a man named Kish and he had a son Saul of great stature and princely bearing. Some of the asses Kish owned had strayed away and he said to Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go seek the asses."

For a long time they searched. As they came near Ramah where Samuel lived, the servant suggested, "There is a man of God living here and all he says is sure to come to pass. Let us speak to him and it may be he can tell us where we should go."

"Well said; let us go," replied Saul, and as they went they met him on their way. The Lord made known to Samuel that this was the man he should choose for king.

As Saul drew near to Samuel, he said, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is."

Samuel answered, "I am the seer; and the asses that were lost are found," and he took Saul and the servant to his own house for the night.

The next morning when Saul started home Samuel

went a little way with him, and as they drew near the gate of the town Samuel said to Saul, "Bid thy man pass on, but do thou stand still for a while, that I may show thee the word of God."

Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him. Now this was done when a man was made high-priest or king.

Then Saul, of great stature and princely bearing, was so plainly puzzled that Samuel explained that God chose him for a king and told him of signs God would send to him that very day. And Samuel left Saul and all that he said came to pass. And God was pleased with Saul and gave him a new heart, but as yet none but these two knew that he was to be king of the Jews.

Samuel now gathered all the tribes at a place called Mizpah to draw lots for the kingship. From the tribes was selected the one tribe of Benjamin, and from that tribe was selected the one family of Matri, and Saul the son of Kish was taken. But when they sought for Saul he could not be found. The Lord told them he had hidden among the tents and wagons. They quickly ran and fetched him out, and when he stood among the people he was taller than any of the men.

Samuel said, "See the man whom the Lord hath sent to rule thee! There is none like him as thou canst see."

And they all shouted, "God save the king!"

Then Samuel told them what they were to do and how the king was to rule and wrote it down in a book, after which he sent all the people away, every man to his house.

Israel had a king.

THE BOY DAVID

SAUL ruled over the people of Israel but he was not a good king and God told Samuel his reign should be short. He commanded Samuel to go down to Bethlehem to the home of a man named Jesse, "for," said God, "I have provided me a king among his sons."

DAVID ANOINTED BY SAMUEL

So Samuel went to Bethlehem and Jesse had his seven sons pass one by one before Samuel. Samuel thought the first-born must be the one God chose to be king. But the Lord said, "Look not on his face, or on his height because I have refused him. The Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

And they all went by and not one of them was he whom God had chosen.

Then Samuel turned to Jesse and said, "Are these all thy sons?"

"No, there is one left," Jesse replied, "but he is quite a lad and is now in the field where he watches sheep."

Samuel said, "Send for him," and he was brought in and stood before Samuel, his cheeks aglow. Then God said to Samuel, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he."

And David, the strong, ruddy boy, went back to the fields to watch his father's sheep, but the Lord was there to make him wise and fit for the high place he was to fill.

Now at this time Saul was not well and his mind was ill at ease. He was often angry with those about him, and his men said it might soothe him to have someone play on the harp, for sweet music sometimes calms the mind.

Someone in Saul's court remembered the shepherd boy at Bethlehem and said, "I have seen a son of Jesse at Bethlehem who is skilful on the harp. He is valiant, wise and comely too."

Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, saying, "Send me David thy son, who cares for the sheep."

So David came to Saul and became his armor-bearer. When the king was downcast and ill at ease he would summon David and the lad, harp in hand, would play for him until he was refreshed. And Saul learned to love David.

DAVID SLAYS GOLIATH

WHILE Saul was yet king the Philistines fought the people of Israel. Saul and his warriors went out to meet them in battle. There were two hills on either side of a deep vale through which ran a mountain stream, and it was from these two hills the foemen fought.

The Philistines had a man named Goliath who was more than ten feet tall. He wore a coat of mail and was bound with brass from head to foot, so that no sword or spear could wound him. But in Saul's camp was no such mighty champion.

Day after day Goliath came down to the dividing stream and cried to Saul's men, "Choose a man from your midst and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants, but if I kill him then you must serve us. I defy you to send a man to fight with me!"

Now when the war had broken out three of Jesse's sons went with Saul's army.

One day Jesse said to David, "Son, take this parched corn and these ten loaves of bread, and run down to camp and bring me back word how thy brothers are."

So David rose early the next morn, left the sheep with a keeper and sped across the high moors. He reached camp just as the men were on their way to fight, for both armies were in battle array. The air was filled with their shouting. David left the food he had brought in the care of the baggage warden and ran to greet his brothers.

While he was talking to them, the champion Goliath strode out from the ranks of the Philistines in his clanking mail, and loudly he shouted his usual challenge.

David heard it all, and saw the men of Israel turn in fear.

"Who is this heathen Philistine," he asked, "that he defies the army of the living God?"

The men round about him told him, adding, "A happy day it will be for the man who slays him, for King Saul has promised him great wealth, his daughter for a wife, and a high place in the kingdom."

DAVID BEFORE KING SAUL

David's oldest brother heard this conversation and his anger was kindled against David. He spoke sharply to the lad, telling him to go home and take care of his sheep for it was just a trick of his to come to camp that he might see the battle.

The men to whom David had talked related to Saul what David had said. They were commanded to bring the boy to him and when David stood in the presence of King Saul, he said, "Let no man's heart fail because of this Philistine; thy servant will go and fight him."

"Thou art not able to fight him," answered Saul, failing to recognize the boy who used to play on the harp for his pleasure. "Thou art but a youth; he a man of war."

Then David recounted how he had fought and slain the wild beasts that had attacked the lambs of his flock, concluding, "This man is no more than a wild beast and the Lord will deliver me from him as He delivered me from the paw of the lion and the bear."

King Saul said, "Go, and the Lord go with thee!" And he put on him a coat of mail, and hung a sword at his side.

But David took them all off and said, "I have not tried them and cannot use them." Instead he picked up five smooth stones from a brook and placed them in a bag he wore. Only his sling was in his hand as he drew near to Goliath.

As the giant came close to David and saw what a youth he was, he threw back his head with great scorn. "Am I a dog," he cried, "that thou comest to me with stones," and he cursed David by all his gods.

Then spoke David: "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I cometh to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel."

Then David ran to meet him, and as he ran he drew forth one of his five stones. Quickly he slung it and struck Goliath on the forehead with such force that he fell on his face to the earth. So did David, the shepherd boy, conquer the mighty warrior with sling and stone. He ran and stood on Goliath, took the giant's sword and cut off his head. And when the Philistines saw Goliath was dead, they fled in wild confusion.

JONATHAN, FRIEND OF DAVID

NOW Jonathan, Saul's own son, had been watching the brave shepherd lad, and he loved him as he loved his own soul. To show his love, he stripped himself of his prince's robe and put it on David; he gave him his girdle with its jewels, his bow and his sword. So was the soul of Jonathan knit with the soul of David.

JONATHAN LOVED DAVID

For a time all went well. King Saul made David commander of his men of war, and gave him one of his daughters for a wife. He was the hero of the land.

One day as David returned from battle, the women of Israel came out of the cities to meet their victorious army, dancing and singing in exultation:

"Saul has slain his thousands—
And David his tens of thousands!"

From that day forward Saul eyed David with disfavor and on the morrow as David stood playing the harp before him as in the old days, Saul twice hurled his javelin at David; but twice David avoided the attack.

That night David fled from the king's house to his own home and Saul set a watch upon him that he might slay him in the morning. But David's wife, Saul's own daughter, let David down from a window, and he escaped.

One day David sought out Jonathan and said, "What have I done that the king seeks my life?"

Jonathan replied, "My father would have told me if he meant to kill thee."

"Thy father knoweth I have found favor in thine eyes and he keeps his purpose from thee, but truly there is but a step between death and me," David insisted.

The next day was to be a feast day, and the king would expect David at the table. David lived in such fear of Saul that he begged Jonathan to let him hide himself for three days. "If the king asks for me, say that thou didst give me leave to go to Bethlehem as it is a time of sacrifice in my father's house."

The two planned that at the end of three days David should conceal himself in a field near a rock and Jonathan would give David news by what he said to the little lad who gathered his arrows. If he said to the boy, "Go find them, they are on this side of thee," then David might know the king would do him no harm. But if he should cry out, "Are not the arrows beyond thee? Go further!"

David would know that he must flee at once for safety.

The feast was spread, and when King Saul saw David was not in his place he said not a word. The second day of the feast came; when Saul saw David was still absent, he said to Jonathan, "Why comes not David to the feast these two days?"

Then Jonathan told how David had desired to go to Bethlehem for the yearly sacrifice. "And so his place is empty at the king's table," he concluded.

Then Saul was in a great rage and exclaimed, "As long as David lives, thou canst not be king! Send for him, for he shall surely die."

But Jonathan protested loyally, "Why should he be slain? What hath he done?"

Saul answered by throwing his spear at Jonathan, who sprang from the table in hot anger for now he knew Saul was determined to slay David.

The next morning Jonathan went to the field where David lay in hiding and took a little lad with him to whom he said, "Run now and pick up the arrows that I shoot."

As the boy ran, Jonathan sent an arrow over his head and when the lad came to the place where it fell, Jonathan cried out, "It is beyond thee! Make haste and stay not!"

David heard these words and after Jonathan had given the boy his bow and arrows with the command, "Go, carry them to the city," David came out of his hiding place and bowed to the ground three times. Then he threw his arms round Jonathan's neck and the two friends wept as if their hearts would break.

JONATHAN SHOOTING THE ARROWS

"Go in peace!" said Jonathan. "We have sworn that the Lord shall be between me and thee, and between my children and thy children forever."

So they parted, and David fled southward. There gathered around him his kinsmen and many that were oppressed, and he became captain of about four hundred.

Saul went out with a large force of men to seek David on the rocks where the wild goats fed, but the Lord saved him from his pursuer.

Once indeed Saul came into the very cave occupied by David and his men. Saul lay down to rest and David might have killed him as he stood above the unconscious

king. Instead he cut off the skirt of his robe, and when Saul went out of the cave David followed and cried, "My lord and my king!" holding up the piece of cloth as proof he had spared the king's life.

It was in these days that Samuel died. They buried him in the garden of his house at Ramah, and all Israel mourned for him.

Saul's hatred of David grew with the passing years and he pitched the camp of his army of three thousand picked men upon a hill. Now David's spies reported to him and David went so close that he could see the watch-fires round the king's camp. David asked, "Who will go down with me to the camp of Saul?"

"That will I," volunteered Abishai, his sister's son.

So the two came to the trench where Saul slept, his men about him, his spear stuck in the ground at his head.

Abishai said, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hand this day. I pray thee let me smite him."

David answered, "Kill him not. Take thou the spear that is at his bolster and the cruse of water and let us go."

So they got out of camp, and in the clearness of the morning David stood on a far-off hilltop and taunted Abner, the captain of Saul's army, displaying the king's spear and cruse of water as a proof of his worthlessness.

When Saul knew David had again spared his life, all hate went out of his heart and he wept as he said, "Thou hast done good to me for wrongs I did thee. Now I know thou wilt some day be the king of Israel." And Saul went home. But David knew he could not trust Saul, so he escaped to the Philistines and dwelt in the town of Gath.

THE DEATH OF KING SAUL

A year and four months after this, war broke out between the Philistines and Israelites. As Saul saw the mighty army of his foes, his heart trembled with fear. He asked the Lord what he should do, but God did not come to him in dreams or speak one word to him.

Samuel was dead, and the Lord said it was a sin to go to a witch or seer to find out things that would take place. But now he was in such a strait he felt he must have help of some sort. In his despair, one of his men told him there was at Endor a witch who could foretell what was to take place. Saul disguised himself and went to her.

The witch made strange signs and spoke strange words, and when she saw the form of Samuel rise up she cried with a loud voice, "Why didst thou deceive me? Thou art Saul!"

Saul told Samuel he was in great trouble, that God had left him and answered him no more, either through wise men or through dreams.

Samuel said, "God hath done to thee just as He hath said. Thy reign is at an end and David shall rule in thy stead. To-morrow thou and thy sons shall die, and Israel be delivered into the hands of the Philistines."

When Saul heard these words he fell in a faint, for all that day and all that night he had had no food. The witch brought bread, and Saul and his men ate, then went their way in the darkness of the night.

Now the Philistines mustered all their troops in one place. The king of Gath took David and his men with him, but the lords of the Philistines would not have the Jews in their army, lest they should betray them into the

hands of King Saul. So David and his men were compelled to leave the camp.

On the morrow the battle raged fiercely, and Jonathan and his two brothers were slain. An arrow struck Saul and wounded him severely. Turning to his shield-bearer, Saul exclaimed, "Draw thy sword and put me to death!" But the shield-bearer dared not kill his king. Then Saul took his own sword, fell on it and thus died by his own hand.

When it was known that Saul and his sons had perished, the army of the Israelites fled and to the Philistines belonged the victory.

When David learned all this he made a dirge for Saul and Jonathan whom he loved, and it was taught to the little children of Judah. These were the words they sang for many a day:

The flower of Israel is slain upon thy high places.
How are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the heathen triumph.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives;
In their death they were not divided.
They were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan!
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me;
Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen
And the weapons of war perished!

SOLOMON AND HIS WISDOM

SHIPS OF SOLOMON

AFTER Saul died David was an outlaw no longer. He returned to his own people and in the course of a few years was king of Israel and went to live at Jerusalem. He ruled for forty years. When he was an old man and felt death was near, he bade his men pour oil on his son Solomon's head, blow a horn and cry out, "God save King Solomon!" This was done, and when David died Solomon sat on his throne and ruled Israel.

God spoke to Solomon in a dream one night, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

Solomon answered, "Oh Lord, my God, grant me a wise mind and an understanding heart that I may know right from wrong and rule well those who look up to me as their king."

This speech pleased the Lord and he said, "Since thou didst not ask me for great wealth, or for long life, or that thy foes be put to death, I will make thee wise and will give thee both great wealth and a long life if thou wilt serve me and keep my laws."

When Solomon had reigned for four years he began building a temple where the Israelites could worship God. He sent to the King of Tyre who had offered to aid in the undertaking, and the servants of the two kings worked side by side cutting down cedar trees in Lebanon out of which the temple was to be built. They brought great stones from the quarries, and laid the foundations of the temple on one of the hilltops in Jerusalem.

The temple was built of stone, and each stone was hewn from the rock, cut with such care ere it was brought to the hilltop that it would fit in the temple wall. The sound of no axe or hammer was heard in the temple when it was building.

It took seven years to build the magnificent temple of the Lord. When it was completed Solomon proclaimed a feast and the priests brought the ark from Mount Zion where David had kept it. The ark was put in its place and as the priests came out there was such a cloud in the temple that all the people stood still, for the Lord was in the cloud. Then Solomon asked the Lord to come down and dwell in the temple and in men's hearts that they might walk in the right way and love God all their days.

ELIJAH, THE PROPHET OF GOD

AHAB was the last of the six kings who ruled the ten tribes after the kingdom was divided following Solomon's reign, and he made his people worship the idol Baal.

Now there was a prophet named Elijah who still loved God, and God sent him to Ahab with the message that as a punishment for worshipping idols there should be no rain in the land for years and years. God told Elijah to hide from the angry Ahab and that a brook would supply him drink while the birds would bring him food.

Elijah obeyed as the Lord told him and drank from the brook and the birds of the air brought him food from day to day. But at last as there was no rain and there was lack of food in the land, the brook dried up. God told Elijah to go to the city and there he would find a woman who would supply him with food.

When Elijah came near to the gate of the town he saw a woman gathering sticks and he said to her, "Bring me, I pray thee, a bit of bread in thy hand."

She answered, "As the Lord lives, I have no bread in the house and only a handful of meal and a few drops of oil. I came out to gather a few sticks that I might light a fire and bake a small loaf for me and my son. After that we must die."

"Fear not; go and do as thou hast said," Elijah said. "But first make a small loaf for me, and then make one for thee and thy son. For the Lord hath said, The meal shall not waste nor the cruse of oil fail till the day the Lord sends rain."

So the woman went her way and did as Elijah said. And she was amazed to find that as fast as she used the

meal, more meal came in her barrel. From that time there was no lack of food in her house.

For three years there had been no rain in the land and Elijah went again to King Ahab and told him to call all the people together at Mount Carmel. When they had gathered, Elijah cried out, "How long will ye turn your hearts from God? Let the priests of the idol bring two young bulls, and we will make two offerings, one to God and one to the idol Baal. Then the priests of Baal will call to their god and I will call on the Lord and the real god will send fire to his offering."

They agreed this was a good plan and they cried out from sunrise till noon, "Oh Baal, hear us!" They prayed until it was the hour for the evening sacrifice. But Baal, their god, neither spoke nor answered their petition.

Elijah now put his offering upon the other altar and said, "Fill four barrels with water and pour it upon the sacrifice and on the wood." When the water had been brought he said, "Do it the second time," and again, "Do it the third time." And the water ran about the altar, even filling the trench. Then Elijah cried, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, and let it be known that Thou art the true God."

At once fire came down from on high and burned up the offering and even the stones of the altar.

When the people saw this they all bowed to the ground and cried, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

As they destroyed the idols and returned to the worship of God, the sky grew overcast, great clouds piled up and soon there was the sound of abundance of rain. Parched earth and famished people received it as God's own gift.

DANIEL'S TEST

THERE was a king of Babylon whose name was Nebuchadnezzar. He laid siege to Jerusalem and when he captured it, among the lads he carried back to his own court as hostages was Daniel.

When Nebuchadnezzar died, a new king came to the throne of Babylon. His name was Belshazzar. He made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and sent for the precious cups his father had brought to Babylon from the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. And he and all at the feast drank wine from these cups, which was a great sin.

In the midst of the revelry there came forth a man's hand that wrote on the wall of the king's palace. No one could read the writing and the king knew not what to do. All the wise men were summoned without avail. At last Daniel was called, the king promising him great wealth and high rank if he could read the words.

Daniel said, "Keep thy gifts, O king, and give thy fees to someone else. Yet will I read the words on the wall and tell what they mean. For the God who gives thee life and takes care of thee thou hast no word of praise. And so God sent this hand to write on the palace wall

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN

which is to say, *counted, counted, weighed, divided.*

"Counted, counted—God has counted up thy kingdom and finished it.

"Weighed—God has weighed thee in the balances and found thee lacking.

"Divided—God will divide thy kingdom and give it to the Medes and Persians."

DANIEL'S TEST

"O KING, MY GOD HATH SHUT THE LIONS' MOUTHS SO THAT
THEY HAVE NOT HURT ME, SINCE I HAD DONE
NO WRONG IN GOD'S SIGHT."

DANIEL'S TEST

Belshazzar commanded his men to clothe Daniel in princely scarlet, to put a gold chain around his neck and to proclaim him third in rank from the king.

But the same night Belshazzar was slain and Babylon fell into the hands of the Medes and Persians, as Daniel had foretold.

Now Darius became king after Belshazzar. He was pleased with Daniel and made him one of three princes to rule the land. Daniel so far surpassed all in wisdom that Darius thought to give him charge of the whole kingdom, and his overthrow was plotted by those who were jealous of him.

They came to the king and asked him to make a law that if anyone should ask help of God or man for the space of thirty days he should be cast into a pit of lions. Help might be asked of the king but of no one else. The king put his name to the law, and though Daniel knew the decree had been signed, he went to his home and knelt down three times a day with his face to Jerusalem, and prayed and gave thanks to God just as he had done all his life.

The men who desired his downfall drew near his house and heard him pray, then charged him before the king with breaking the law. The king was deeply grieved to think he had made such a law and tried his best to save Daniel, but the plotters held him strictly to his word, reminding him the law was unchangeable.

The king yielded, but said to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou dost serve so well, may He deliver thee!"

Then they took Daniel, eighty years old though he

was, and cast him into the pit of lions and over the mouth of the pit they laid a stone.

That night the king would take no food nor did he sleep, but at dawn he rose and went in haste to the pit of lions. As he drew near he cried out in a sad voice, "O Daniel, canst thy God save thee from the lions?"

"O king, my God hath shut the lions' mouths so that they have not hurt me, since I had done no wrong in God's sight nor in thine," was Daniel's calm answer.

Then the king rejoiced and commanded his men to take Daniel out of the pit. And when he was brought out there was not a scratch on him for his trust was in God and God took care of him.

But those who had plotted against Daniel the king ordered cast into the pit—they, their wives and their children—and the lions were quick to eat them up. Then Darius made a law that all men should serve the God of Daniel, "for He is the living God, and abides forever and ever."

GOOD QUEEN ESTHER

FAR back in the past, wise men had foretold that the Jews would be held as captives in a strange land for three score and ten years, and at the end of that time a king, Cyrus, would permit them to return to Jerusalem. All this came to pass.

Not all the Jews went back to their own land, but some of them made their homes in Persia and elsewhere. This happened when Ahasuerus ruled from India to Ethiopia.

In the third year of his reign he made a great feast. On the seventh day of the merrymaking he sent a message for Vashti the queen to throw off her veil that his guests might see how fair she was. But Vashti refused to do it.

Then the king was in a rage, and said she should no longer be queen.

Thereupon some of the king's servants who ministered to him said it would be a good plan for him to have all the fair maids in the land brought to his house, that he might choose one of them for queen in place of Vashti.

Now in the king's household there was a Jew whose name was Mordecai. He was a poor man, and was there to wait on the king. There lived with him a maiden named Esther, his orphan cousin, fair of face and full of grace.

When the word went forth from the king, scores and scores of fair young maids were taken to the king's house, among them Esther.

As soon as Esther appeared before the king in her turn, he fell in love with her, placed the royal crown on her head, and made her queen in the place of Vashti.

Then the king proclaimed a great feast and gave gifts to the poor in honor of the new queen. And Esther had

not yet made it known that her people were Jews, for these were Mordecai's instructions and she obeyed him as though she was still a member of his household.

Now two of the king's men who stood on guard at the doors were wroth with the king and sought to kill him.

Mordecai, who was a watchman at the king's gate, discovered this plot and reported it to Esther, and she in turn told the king. The plot being proved, both men were hung and what Mordecai had done to save the king's life was written down in the chronicles of the king.

Now there was also in the king's household a man whose name was Haman. And the king gave him a high place and commanded those of low rank to bow down to Haman.

But Mordecai at the gate would not bow when Haman went in and out, for he was a Jew.

Haman was a vain man, and when he saw that Mordecai did not bow in reverence to him as the others did, he was filled with wrath. He scorned to lay hands on Mordecai only, but sought to destroy all the Jews in the kingdom. He told the king if he would make a law that all the Jews should be put to death, he would pay into the king's treasury a large sum of gold and silver.

The king heard what Haman said, and then took his ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, telling him to use it as a seal and do with the Jews as he thought best.

Haman set the scribes to work, and they wrote just what he told them, in the king's name. And when the wax was put at the end and the king's ring used to seal it, it was the same as if it had been written by the king's own hand.

Men were sent out in haste to proclaim the law throughout the land, that all the Jews in Persia were to be slain on a certain day.

When Mordecai heard of the new law he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, a sign of deep sorrow, and went out and cried bitterly. And he came and stood in front of the king's gate, though he could not pass through for it was the law that none should pass who wore sackcloth.

Queen Esther had not heard of the law, but her maids came and told her the sad state of Mordecai. She sent food and clothes to him, and bade the men take the sackcloth from him. But Mordecai would accept nothing from their hands, nor would he change his clothes.

Then the queen sent one of her chief servants, Hatach, to ask Mordecai the cause of his grief and the reason he had put on sackcloth. Mordecai told Hatach of the law and told him to bid her see the king and beg him to save the Jews. And Hatach carried the word to the queen.

Esther bade him tell her uncle it was well known that those who went unbidden to the king were put to death unless the king held out his golden sceptre as a sign he would spare their lives. "The king has not sent for me for a month," said Esther. "How then can I go to him?"

Mordecai sent back this message to the queen: "Think not thou shalt escape alone of all the Jews because thou art in the king's house. Who knoweth whether thou art there for just such a time as this?"

Esther replied with a request that he and all the Jews in the king's court should fast and pray for her and neither

GOOD QUEEN ESTHER

WHEN THE KING SAW HER, GOD PUT IT INTO HIS HEART TO BE GRACIOUS. HE HELD OUT THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE AND THE QUEEN DREW NEAR

touch food nor drink for three days and three nights.

"I and my maids will do the same," said the queen, "and I will go in to the king in spite of the law. And if I die, I die in a good cause."

So on the third day the queen donned royal apparel and went in and stood very near the throne. When the king saw her, God put it into his heart to be gracious. As he held out the golden sceptre, the queen drew near and touched the tip of it.

The king asked, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther?"

"If it please the king, let him and Haman come this day to a feast I have prepared for them," she replied.

Then the king said, "Bid Haman make haste," and they both went to the feast. While they drank the wine, the king told Esther to make known her wish, but she put him off and said she would tell him the next day if he and Haman would attend the feast she would then spread.

Haman went out and boasted to all his friends how kind the king and queen had been to him, of the feast set for the next day when he was to be the single guest and declared his life would be full of joy were it not for the one Jew at the king's gate.

Haman's wife and all his friends advised him to fix a rope to a tall tree and persuade the king the next day to hang the offensive Jew. The plan pleased Haman and he had the gallows made ready.

Now that night the king could not sleep, and he sent for the book in which was recorded all that took place in the realm. When the attendant read how Mordecai had discovered the plot against the king's life, the king in-

quired, "How has Mordecai been rewarded for this deed?"

The reader said he had had nothing; he still kept watch at the king's gate.

The king heard a step outside and sent a servant to see who it was. Now Haman had come to the king's palace to beg him to hang Mordecai, and when the man returned with the report that Haman stood in the court, the king said, "Let him come in." When Haman stood before him, the king asked, "What shall be done to the man who has won the praise of the king?"

Haman thought, "That means me, of course; no one else!" So he said, "Let the robes be brought that the king wears, and the horse he rides and the crown which is set on his head. Let the robes and the crown be put on the man whom the king has in mind. Bring him on horseback through the streets of the city and have men go before him and cry out, 'Thus shall it be done to the man who has won the praise of the king!' "

And the king said to Haman, "Make haste and do thus and no less to the Jew at the king's gate."

Haman could do nothing else than obey the king and after he had honored Mordecai in all these ways, the Jew returned to his place at the king's gate, while Haman went home, hiding his face for very shame. He told his wife and his friends of his hard fate, and while they were yet talking, the king's men came for him to go to the queen's feast.

While they ate and drank, the king bade the queen make known her wish. "Ask what thou wilt. Were it half my realm, I would give it thee," he said.

"If it please thee, O king, take my life and spare the lives

of all the Jews. For we have been sold and the truth has not been told about us and we are to be put to death."

The king said, "Who is he and where is he who has dared to do this thing?"

"This wicked Haman," the brave Esther declared.

When shown the rope and the tree on which Haman meant to hang Mordecai, the king said, "Hang *him* on it."

And they hung Haman.

On the same day the king gave Mordecai the ring Haman had worn and the queen put him at the head of Haman's house.

But Esther was sad at heart because of the law that all the Jews in the land should be put to death. So she went in once more to the king—though he had not sent for her—and fell down at his feet in tears. The king was gracious to her and held out his sceptre, so the queen rose and stood before him and asked him to change the law and spare the lives of the Jews.

The king could not change the law but he told Esther and Mordecai to draw up a law that would please them and sign it with the king's seal. So they decreed that the Jews should kill all those who came to do them harm.

Swift riders on horses and mules and camels proclaimed the law throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom and all the Jews rejoiced. When the day came that Haman had set for the Jews to be slain, the Jews went out and fought for their lives and put their foes to rout. Then grief gave way to joy, and a feast was held for two days.

This feast was called the Feast of Purim, which the Jews observe to this day.

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